

The Road to Calvary Lesson 1

Who Do Men Say That I Am?

A Bible Study Lesson of the Mount Zion Church
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We Have the Vision to be a LEARNING Church!



Series Introduction

The following series of eight (8) lessons represents scenes in the ministry of Jesus Christ. While not exhaustive of His ministry, the purpose is to help students understand the message and the methods Jesus used to convey the plan of salvation. In each lesson, a central question will frame the study and by answering the question, my hope is that students will understand what Jesus did to purchase our salvation (1 Peter 1: 18-19).

Students will find activities to challenge their thinking. The study of the Bible is to help us to mature as followers of Christ. As students work through each lesson, they will have opportunity to exercise their new understandings with others. Finally, the following study is to be shared with others and I look forward to feedback from those who utilize these materials. Please feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with me at mtzionok@swbell.net. Thanks and enjoy!

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Introduction: The question of Jesus' identity has been debated since the beginning of His ministry. Luke 4: 14-28 indicates that from the beginning of Jesus' ministry he was rejected and doubted. The religious leaders questioned how a carpenter's son could do what Jesus did in Matthew 13:55. Even Jesus' family had concerns that He might be crazy and wanted to have an intervention with Him while the teachers of the Law wanted to have an exorcism in Mark 3:20-22. Jesus' ministry consistently brought Him into conflict with the perceptions and expectations of who the Messiah was supposed to be and what the Messiah was supposed to do. The following lesson centers on the question of the identity of Jesus and how we as believers can understand and explain that Jesus is the Christ.



KEY VERSES:

Mark 8: 27-35

SUPPORTING VERSES:

I. The Question—Mark 8: 27-29

The question Jesus poses to the disciples is raised after the healing of a blind man. The gradual healing of the man (he sees in stages and then fully) mirrors the revelation process that the disciples have (and many of us have as well!). Jesus' actions, words, and deeds occurred over a three-year period of time. The people of that day faced a complete retraining of their thinking about the Messiah as they experienced Jesus' ministry. Thus, the question was no small query. Rather, it served as the litmus test for Jesus disciples to speak what their hearts had believed.

Notice the question format. It is a general question pointed at the crowds of people who were now arriving to see the miracles and hear the messages spoken by Jesus. This question is relevant even today.

- Who do people in general say that Jesus is?
- What have you heard about Jesus?
- Do all the people you know confess a faith in Jesus?

Readers of Mark's gospel will not that a confession of Jesus' true identity primarily had come from non-Jewish people or outsiders (See Mark 5: 25, 7: 24, 7: 31). This question of the crowd's definition of Jesus serves an interesting point here. It is often those who are on the outside group who will by faith accept the truth of Jesus. Why do you think this is the case? _____

Could it be that the rigid structures that have been erected within many of our churches serves as a barrier to the people meeting and accepting Christ? Perhaps the issue that challenged the teachers of the law and other church leaders had to do with boxing God into a corner where He was expected to do A, but He chose to do B. Their lack of "vision" for how God functioned created, at best skepticism, and at worst opposition to the carpenter's son (lowly blue collar worker) being the savior of the world.

Notice Peter's answer. The people had multiple ideas about Jesus' identity. They recognized that something was different about him but did not have a definitive answer. Some said he was John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other prophet.

How do you combat the question of Jesus' identity from those who doubt His Messiahship?

II. The Answer—Mark 8: 29

Jesus then poses the question to the disciples. The you is written in the plural form. The question is who do you, as a group, say that I am. Peter answers with a confession that Jesus is the Son of God. One might think that Peter's answer solved every level of misunderstanding that would be had during Jesus' ministry. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Jesus immediately begins to explain what His ministry entailed and in response Peter begins to tell Jesus what he should and should not do. The problem was a lack of true understanding of who Jesus is.

Activity Directions: Fill in the blank.

Jesus told me to do _____ and I chose to do _____ because _____.

- How does your response to Jesus' command indicate that you are in the process of understanding who Jesus is?
- If you truly understood who Jesus is, how would you respond? Why?

III. Peter's/ Our Need to Understand—Mark 8:31-32

Jesus requires of Peter and the disciples to not broadcast what they understand on a basic level. He then begins to explain to them the purpose of the Messiah. Notice the four purposes Mark records.

1. To suffer
2. To be rejected
3. To be killed
4. To be raised from the dead

These four do not seem to fit within the ideology of those who looked for a heroic Messiah in the image of the Old Testament King, David. The problem for many has been that they desire to pick and choose the image that suits their desires rather than looking to scripture for what God has spoken. In Genesis 3: 15 the Messiah is shown as a fighter against Satan as He crushes (in battle) the head of Satan after he has been bitten on the heel. In Psalm 118: 22 He is shown to be a rejected stone. In Micah 5:2 He is shown to come from an insignificant and little town called Bethlehem. In Isaiah 53: 5 He is shown to suffer for our sake. These and many other Biblical passages suggest that our expectation of the Messiah was often misplaced and even totally wrong.

In order for us to truly walk in the knowledge of our faith, we must first accept that Jesus' primary goal was to come and die for the sins of the world. That is it. The beautiful pictures we use to represent the warm and fuzzy feelings we have about Jesus ministry are inaccurate to what He experienced. The Christ, Jesus did not have comfort. He had hard work and people who did not understand Him (Luke 9: 58).

Our role as Christians must be to grow such an appreciation for His purpose and finished work that we choose the same type of ministry as Jesus.

When we truly understand who He is, it will challenge us to take up our cross of responsibility and get to work in places that are not easy or comfortable. Jesus is the Christ and that declaration means we understand sacrifice, suffering, rejection, loneliness, inconsistent friends, hard work, and then reward.

Action Step: Now that you understand the person and role of the Messiah, how will it impact your Christian walk this week?